

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

**NOVEMBER 16, 2006  
44 FRONT STREET, ROOM 510**

**Commission Members Present:** Thomas Johnson  
Thomas Conroy  
Michael Theerman  
Thomas Constantine  
Nicholas Plante

**Staff Present:** Lara Bold, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Ruth Gentile, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

**REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, it was voted 5-0 by Commissioners Johnson, Conroy, Theerman, Constantine and Plante to approve the October 26, 2006 minutes.

The Commission held approval of the minutes of November 2, 2006.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, it was voted 5-0 by Commissioners Johnson, Conroy, Theerman, Constantine and Plante to approve the meeting schedule for January through June, 2007. The meetings will be held at 44 Front Street, Suite 300.

Ms. Bold informed the Commission that DPRS staff will have a final update on the question of special tax assessments and the Historical Commission's proposed regulations by December 31, 2006.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- 1. 1543 Main Street (HC-06-31):** Patricia Gates, Al Giabello and Jeff Howland, representatives for the petitioner, Kettle Brook Lofts, LLC, presented the plan. Ms. Gates stated that the developer of the Kettle Brook Lofts project, abutting 1543 Main Street, had originally wanted to purchase the property earlier to incorporate into the project, but it was too expensive at the time. Now the property is available and Kettle Brook Lofts, LLC is in the process of acquiring it. Ms. Gates informed the Commission that there are several benefits to buying the property including: 1) the bridge can be shorter, allowing the possibility of three bridge companies to build it, instead of one; 2) the impervious surface will be able to be reduced; 3) traffic will be reduced in back; and 4) Kettle Brook will be protected.

Mr. Giabello, architect for the project, stated that the structure at 1543 Main Street has changed over the years from its original use as the mill owner's house, to a restaurant, a piano bar and other uses. He also stated that the road encroaches on the current building and the building is on the edge of the river. Mr. Giabello stated that the architectural presence of the building is insignificant and that it is vinyl sided and in ill repair. Commissioner Theerman stated that the building does have some architectural features such as: a slate roof and cornice brackets. Mr. Giabello informed the Commission that the owner would be willing to give any parts of the building to interested parties. Jeff Howland stated that the building is in poor condition and it would be cost prohibitive to renovate it. Deborah Packard, Executive Director of Preservation Worcester asked if the owner would be willing to give away the whole building. Mr. Giabello stated that it was a possibility and he would be willing to discuss the idea with Preservation Worcester.

Commissioner Theerman inquired as to whether the building could be reused. Ms. Gates stated the building poses significant challenges for reuse in its current location because it does not have enough parking for most commercial uses.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the Form B survey from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, although written in 1970, stated that the structure at 1543 Main Street was one of the most fanciful examples of Queen Anne architecture to be built in Worcester.

Ms. Gates stated that by removing the building, the parking for the residential project will change from the original plan to having more parking in the front and more open space in the rear which is a priority of the Worcester Land Trust which manages abutting conservation land. The bridge will be 24 feet wide with a 5 foot sidewalk and will also resolve some traffic issues in Leicester.

Brian Traberner of 17 Brook Street, Leicester was concerned that the building was not kept up and was not concerned with the change of plans for this property.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, the Commission voted that the demolition associated with the proposed exterior work would not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester: the motion failed with a vote of 2-2 (4 votes need to pass or deny) (Commissioner Theerman abstained), (Commissioners Johnson and Conroy voting against).

Chair Johnson asked the applicant to explain the economic hardship that the Demolition Delay would cause. Ms. Gates and Mr. Howland stated that the cost of a longer bridge would be in excess of \$1 million, while the shorter bridge is estimated to cost \$600,000. By having more parking, the front half of the building can be developed before absorbing the cost of the bridge. The phasing of the project would involve building out the front half of the structure, then building the bridge, and then finishing the remainder of the building. When asked what a year delay would cause for hardship, the response was that market conditions could change and that the City of Worcester is eager to get the project back onto the tax rolls. Jeff Howland stated that with the new plan, 50 units can be sold instead of 14 before building the bridge. He stated that it will take approximately one year to build the bridge, and that they had already gotten permits to construct two models and a sales unit.

Commissioner Theerman asked if the owner and architect could salvage some architectural details. Commissioner Conroy stated that there are some features he would like to see salvaged such as; the octagonal tower, eyebrow tower, peaks and gables. He stated that he would like to see paperwork showing the financial impact.

Ms. Gates asked to continue the Demolition Delay Waiver to December 14, 2006 and to extend the constructive grant deadline to December 15, 2006.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, the Commission voted 4-0 (Commissioner Theerman abstained) to continue the Demolition Delay Waiver to December 14, 2006.

2. **107 Water Street (HC-06-32):** Arthur Mooradian and Robert Arakelian, owner and petitioner presented the petition. Mr. Arakelian stated that he met with Joe Sancoucy of the Code Department and was informed that the width of the doorway does not meet code standards and he is looking for a more aesthetic entry. He stated that the storefront is aluminum with plate glass windows. Mr. Arakelian also stated that he is seeking to widen the door for handicapped access, replace the plate glass windows with insulated laminated windows, add crash bars on the doors, and add locks on both the inside and outside.

Commission Johnson asked about the status of the “W” in the doorway and if the petitioner would consider retaining it. Mr. Mooradian stated that the product might crack if they attempted to lift it. Commissioner Conroy stated that he liked the submitted rendering of the storefront and the fact that they were maintaining the top frieze work and diamond shaped modillions.

Upon a motion by Commission Plante and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, the Commission found that the demolition associated with the proposed exterior work as presented would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 5-0.

3. **35 Euclid Avenue (HC-06-33):** Richard Goicz, owner and petitioner presented the plan. He stated that he was installing new steps and railing on the rear deck. He stated that the railings

conform to the house's original style and that the columns on the porch were the original ones and that he was maintaining them as well as the roof brackets. He stated that the pressure treated wood will be hidden and that the steps will be tongue and fir.

Upon a motion by Chair Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission found that the demolition associated with the proposed exterior work as presented would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 5-0.

Upon a motion by Commission Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Commission voted 5-0 to close the public hearing portion of the meeting.

## **PUBLIC MEETING:**

### **1. 23 Oxford Street – Preservation Restriction:**

Commissioner Johnson recused himself stating that he had been involved in the neighborhood for eighteen years. Commissioner Conroy chaired the meeting. Jonathan Finkelstein and Ian Gow, representative and owner presented the petition. Mr. Finkelstein stated that he filed the petition with the City Council to review the restrictions on the property at 23 Oxford Street and that the petition did not request an elimination of the restrictions, but requested modification of the restriction so that Mr. Gow will be able to continue with his plans to convert the structure into residential condominium units. Mr. Finkelstein informed the Commission that when the restrictions were placed on this property many different by-right uses were allowed in the zoning district and that the structure has been a theater, a meeting house and most recently a church. Currently, the zoning district for the property is RG-5 and the only uses allowed by right are residential uses and some exempt uses (such as churches and other nonprofits). Mr. Finkelstein informed the Commission that Mr. Gow had received special permits from the Zoning Board of Appeals and that the plan had been approved with twelve parking spaces. He also informed the Commission that the proposed number of units had since been reduced to five units with ten parking spaces. Mr. Gow stated that when he sought lending for the project, he was informed that the preservation restrictions on the property were held in perpetuity and that Massachusetts Historical Commission, Preservation Worcester, (the successor to the original restriction holder known as Worcester Heritage) and the City Council have the authority to approve modifications to those restrictions. Mr. Finkelstein also stated that Mr. Gow had met with Preservation Worcester and that their main concerns were with exterior changes to the structure and the amount of area that would be devoted to parking. Preservation Worcester had also asked that the parking be moved as far away as possible an existing tree on the property. The only other changes that are being made are to the structure are to the stained glass windows and basement windows. Mr. Gow stated that the basement hatch will be eliminated and replaced with a window well. The basement windows will be opened and will meet the City of Worcester's code standards. The stained glass windows, most of which are double-hung, will be left in place. The present protective plexiglass overlay windows will be replaced by steel-tubed argon filled double-hung insulated windows. The top of these windows will be fixed. Mr. Finkelstein stated that they want to modify the restrictions to

allow work on the windows, to allow the proposed parking, repointing bricks and replacement of the air conditioning units. Mr. Finkelstein informed the Commission that he will bring back some samples of the work. He also stated that the owner will come back before the Commission for a Demolition Delay Waiver.

Mr. Finkelstein stated that Preservation Worcester had three people look at the property with Mr. Gow and, in principle, Preservation Worcester agrees with Mr. Gow's plan but has not officially approved modification of the preservation restrictions. Mr. Finkelstein said that the Massachusetts Historical Commission plans to approve the modification of the preservation restrictions on the property and that Preservation Worcester wants to review the language with its lawyers. He also stated that the Massachusetts Historical Commission wants to use a new template for preservation restrictions that includes everything they have learned over the last four years and it will amend what we want to do. (this part unclear but I don't have the best notes – maybe to include more relevant information or to clarify the restrictions or something) He stated that he would like to come back to give the Board time to take it under advisement.

Commissioner Constantine asked for clarification on what matters were before the Commission relative to the property since the Commission doesn't regularly consider issues of green space or other site conditions. He stated that there was zoning relief that has been granted on this property.

Commissioner Conroy asked why these restrictions were put on the property. Commission Johnson stated that the predecessor of Preservation Worcester may have been concerned that the then Quaker Meeting House was in the first national register district in Worcester and that someone might have been worried that the property might go from a meeting house to a commercial property.

Several neighbors stated that they felt they were not informed about the project and suggested that they walk through the building together. Mr. Finkelstein stated that the house will be on the Preservation Worcester holiday stroll. Mr. Finkelstein stated that he will have a new template outlining exactly which aspects of the preservation restriction will be modified by the next meeting. He stated the he will, also, have the history and renderings of the windows.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.